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FIRST RECORD OF *HEXANCHUS GRISEUS* (BONNATERRE)
FROM SOMALIAN WATERS

(*Selachii Hexanchidae*)

Abstract. — This paper reports the first record of *Hexanchus griseus* from Somali waters, with some bio-ecological annotations about the species.

Key words: *Hexanchus griseus*, Somalia.

Riassunto. — *Prima segnalazione di Hexanchus griseus (Bonnaterre) per le acque della Somalia (Selachii, Hexanchidae).*

Viene segnalato il primo rinvenimento di *Hexanchus griseus* per le acque della Somalia, con alcune annotazioni bio-ecologiche sulla specie.

Introduction.

The bluntnose sixgill shark, *Hexanchus griseus* (BONNATERRE, 1788), is still a poorly known species. It belongs to the Order *Hexanchiformes*, Family *Hexanchidae*. The specimen may be referred to the genus *Hexanchus* by the typical morphology of the teeth.

Its characteristic, comb-shaped lower teeth, placed in six rows, and the small size of the eyes make distinction easy from its rarer congeneric, *Hexanchus vitulus* Springer & Waller, 1969, the bigeyed sixgill shark, in which the lower teeth are placed in five rows, and the eyes are much larger.

The bluntnose sixgill shark is considered a rather primitive shark, retaining an amphystylic suspensorium. Unlike the *Heterodontiformes*, however, it has lost the primitive spines on dorsal fin.

H. griseus is a deep-sea shark, which spends most of its time close to the bottom. It feeds mainly on fishes, both cartilaginous and bony: *Squa-*

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lus (EBERT, 1986), small swordfish, marlin and herring. Its diet also includes invertebrates (squids, shrimps and crabs), carrion (COMPAGNO, 1984), and marine mammals (WHEELER, 1975).

The species is viviparous, bearing 22-108 offsprings which are born 65-70 cm long. Females mature at 420 cm TL (EBERT, 1986). The largest known specimen was 482 cm long (CASTRO, 1983).

Results.

In March 1987, the fishing boat « Stanislaio », from San Benedetto del Tronto (Ascoli Piceno), captured a specimen of *H. griseus* 310 cm long, 60 miles E of Cape Guardafui (Somalia), at a depth of 420 mt, on a sandy and muddy bottom. Only the jaws with the teeth were preserved dry, and have been used for species identification. The sex was not recorded. Measurements of the jaws on each side are: palatoquadrate length 31 cm; lower jaw length 28 cm. The jaws (Fig. 1) are deposited in the collections of the Museo Ittico « A. Capriotti », San Benedetto del Tronto (Ascoli Piceno) (N. Coll. 62).



Fig. 1. — Jaws of Bluntnose Sixgill Shark, *Hexanchus griseus*. Cape Guardafui, 1987.

Discussion.

A perusal of the relevant literature and the files of the F.A.O. Fisheries archives show that the records nearest to Somalia are Madagascar, Aldabra and Comore Islands (COMPAGNO, 1984; SMITH & HEEMSTRA, 1986). RANDALL (1986), in a recent review of the sharks of Arabia, states that no Hexanchid is recorded from Arabian waters.

This new record is not unexpected and fills an otherwise unexplained gap in the known distribution of this shark. The poor record of its range is easy to understand as, though EBERT (1986) writes: «...they are often marketed for human consumption, under the name cowshark», it is only rarely fished by European fishing boats.

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